

THE FELLÄHIN OF UPPER EGYPT

243 strings of women and children can be seen coming from the fields
463 carrying their wages on their heads. The custom of paying in
kind is a very ancient one, and is not confined to harvesters only.
465 The village barber is also paid by his fellow-villagers in this way,
with beans and corn, and those who thus remunerate him can

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FIG. 100. A MUEDDIN RIDING HOME WITH HIS GIFT OF FIRSTFRUITS

501 demand his services for shaving and haircutting for a year. Only
465 those, however, of his own village can pay the barber in this
505 way; outsiders must pay him in cash. This rule applies also
to the ferryman, who, when the fields belonging to a village
lie on the opposite bank of a canal, conveys over the cattle and
labourers every morning, and brings them back just before sunset
(Fig. 108).

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt



FIG. 108. A FERRY-BOAT

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437 At last business is over. Before sundown, after interminable parleyings, the fellah goes home with goods or money calculated to increase his well-being, or at least with pleasant memories of a day full of sights and sounds.

484 Pilgrimages and markets swell the traffic on the country
571 roads. Here again can be seen the love of the fellaheen for crowding together and moving only in congested groups.

484 If they have to cross the Nile or a canal to reach the village opposite, the fellaheen throng so densely into the ferry-boat or raft (*ma'adiya*) that accidents are frequent. [505] When they set out on foot or on donkey-back, laden with [292] astonishing bundles, it looks like an evacuation. When for [494] a long journey they take the *trombil* or *halazona* — an old Ford converted into a bus — forty of them push their way in where there is room for only twenty, and they take it very ill if police regulations are enforced. One of the reasons for a certain minister's unpopularity in the country was his insistence on applying these regulations. When they have [497] to travel by train, they arrive several hours beforehand, cluster on a corner of the platform, and scramble all together into one carriage, even if there is plenty of room elsewhere.

In general, then, the fellaheen like being together, out of doors and in crowds. They are sociable people. But does this mean that they are socially minded? Is there any organic relationship between the members of the peasant group?

361 Let us first of all consider the village as a whole. This
181 with its surrounding land forms a closed system outside which everyone and everything is foreign and unknown. It leads a secluded and individual life, which is organised from within by habits, customs and taboos handed down from the distant past, immemorial laws which rule absolutely the acts and the pleasures of every inhabitant.

181 The fellah finds the same difficulty in widening his out-
169 look in space as in projecting himself into the future and practising foresight. His village is all in all, for it is here and now. It is his country, and the limit of his patriotism.

When a fellah is asked about his nationality, he will reply: "I am from the village of Manfaloot, or Abu Korkas", and occasionally, a little more widely: "I am from the Mudiriya of Menufiya, or Assiut", but rarely, if ever, "I

APPENDIX A

A NOTE ON MOURNING CUSTOMS

Both Christians and Moslems, at the feasts of Christmas^C and Easter, or the Little and Great Bairam^F (""), have a cus-⁷⁶⁵
tom of going to pray at the tombs of their dead. On these⁷⁶⁹
days the cemetery takes on the appearance of a market, in^C
which people of all conditions meet together. Families are^F
continuously arriving. The camel is used to transport the²⁹²
provisions, bedding, boxes and kitchen-ware. Sometimes⁵⁰⁵
the Nile has to be crossed. The people crowd pell-mell into
ferry boats, weighing them down till they are almost awash.
The children, with their best clothes on, are delighted with
the journey, but the women are weeping. When they visit^C
the cemetery for the first time after a burial they cry out in^F
grief, calling on the dead. Some of them stain their faces¹⁵²
with blue and wave their handkerchiefs. I have seen old³⁰²
women scarcely able to walk and broken down by age and⁹⁸⁷
sickness, dragging themselves on this funeral pilgrimage,
which they feel obliged to make, and from which they may
never return.

Then the blood of sacrifice flows over the tomb, and the^C
meat is given to the poor. Such libations and charitable^F
offerings are supposed to comfort the souls of the dead.⁷⁸²
The goats and sheep, feeling their end approaching, cry aloud
in despair. Yet in the dazzling sunshine, the clouds of dust,
the tumult of the crowd, there is something of the holiday
spirit. Hawkers temptingly display their wares, little cafes^C
are opened, swings draw the children away. The families^F
separate, each to visit its own. The upper part of the tomb²⁶⁵
is often built into a dome or living-space. Here the family⁴⁴³
will settle itself, to weep for hour after hour, or to sleep.⁷⁶⁴
Happy are the dead who are remembered, and happier still
those for whom prayers are said.

When someone dies in the village, there is always a^C
mandara (sitting-room) or a tent where the people go to offer^F
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